APU has nearly 400 students pursuing degrees in seven doctoral programs. The following are summaries of just a few of these students’ dissertation research.

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Send the Boy to Boot Camp? Maybe Not – Research Shows Results Are No Better Than Traditional Detention Centers


If teenaged Johnny is a terror to his family, disrespectful and always causing trouble, a popular notion today is to send him to juvenile boot camp to straighten him out. Begun in the 1980s, today scores of programs operate in the juvenile corrections systems of at least 30 states, involving thousands of teen-aged males.

But are they effective? And if so, in what ways? Rachel Riphagen (PsyD, September 2010) reviewed 20 quantitative studies “that researched the effectiveness of juvenile boot camps in the areas of attitude change, educational achievements, graduation rates, recidivism rates, and cost.” She found that, despite their popularity, “… Overall, boot camps perform no better than traditional detention centers.”

Part of the problem was that the researchers who evaluated the boot camps “were not all measuring the same thing… The boot camps in different states had different requirements for admission, different programs and different rules for exiting the program.”

In addition, she said, “There is no current psychological theory that explains why a military correctional-style would be effective with adolescents. If no theory is found to support the idea, then it seems that some changes would need to occur in the juvenile justice system.”

She said she had originally intended to do her dissertation on creating a program for boot camp drop-outs, but “when I found out that the research varied so widely on whether or not boot camps are effective, I needed to change the direction of my dissertation to answer that question.”

As a result of her work, she said “I would not actively recommend correctional center boot camps in the way that they currently operate. Instead, consider family therapy. Consider a positive mentor. Seek help from a professional for support and guidance.”

Riphagen has just finished her internship at Western Youth Services, a community mental health clinic servicing children in Orange County. She plans to continue to work with children and their families.

A Fresh Look at the Eight Beatitudes as ‘Swimming Lessons’ for Staying Afloat with Jesus on the Stormy Seas of Life

TITLE: Twenty Feet Deep: How the Sermon on the Mount Kept Me from Drowning by Dan R. Stewart, D.Min.

The Eight Beatitudes have often been characterized as a list of descriptors for the Christian personality. But they are really much more, according to Dan R. Stewart (D.Min., 2010). He sees them as “swimming lessons” to keep us from spiritually drowning. They are not so much descriptive as prescriptive.

“The Sermon on the Mount became for me...
‘swimming lessons’ with the beatitudes becoming the outline for the sermon,” Stewart said in describing his doctoral project. “By inverting the beatitudes, an outline is formed that breaks down the teaching into eight blessed lessons on how we can keep from drowning when we are in way over our heads.”

Past scholars, he said, have interpreted the Sermon on the Mount as “great teaching, but not for the average person. Others have felt it was for the last days and would be the life style of the final generation.” After years of study, he said, “I believe that the sermon was meant to be practiced.” He’s not alone in this thinking, quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book Ethics: “It is evident that the only appropriate conduct of men before God is the doing of His will. The Sermon on the Mount is there for the purpose of being done…Only in doing can there be submission to the will of God.”

Without Christ, Stewart said, “drowning is inevitable…The Sermon on the Mount answers the cry of people drowning in an ocean of brokenness, offering hope and safety to all who would cry out.”

He hopes to turn his doctoral project into a book for pastors, teachers and lay leaders, and believes it will “supply a fresh way to teach the Sermon on the Mount.”

Currently Stewart is chair of Transformational Ministry at Life Pacific College as well as an adjunct faculty member for Azusa Pacific University.

**Taking the Brothel out of the Girl: Manual Shows Rescue Home Staff How to Help Victims Heal from Trauma of Abuse and Victimization**

**TITLE:**

*A Training Manual for Staff Working With Victims of Trafficking and Prostitution in India*

Julie Fielder Orris, Psy.D.

In its 2007 “Trafficking in Persons” report, the U.S. State Department estimated that the number of people in modern day slavery could be as high as 27 million. The vast majority are women and girls employed in the commercial sex industry, estimated to generate $32 billion in annual profits.

Programs have developed in nearly every country to suppress human trafficking and prostitution, explained Julie Fielder Orris (Psy.D., 2010), who has been to India several times to help with the International Princess Project in its rescue homes for victims of sex trafficking. But, she said, more needs to be done to help the women and children who either escape or are rescued from brothels. Too often, they end up returning to the sex industry because they are unable to reintegrate into normal lives.

“Most, if not all, girls who have been rescued from the brothels suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder,” she explained, and “…[they] have a better chance of healing in the rescue home environment if their psychological and emotional needs are addressed. By training the staff to address these needs, “the girls are more likely to work through their symptoms, and in the end have more success as they attempt to reintegrate into Indian society.”

Her dissertation involved writing a manual to be used by mental health professionals to train staff in rescue homes. The manual was then reviewed by several Indian mental health professionals for cultural relevance and overall effectiveness. The review was invaluable in improving the cultural relevance of the manual, but what was most surprising, she said, was “how well the material did translate. It seems that posttraumatic stress looks very similar from one culture to another.”

Orris, who has started a postdoctoral fellowship at a residential treatment center for severely emotionally disturbed adolescents, is revising her manual based on the feedback received, and plans to write additional manuals for other countries.

**How to Involve the Uninvolved Male Student: Study Investigates the Gender Gap in College Co-Curricular Activities**

**TITLE:**

*A Gendered Perspective on the Predictors of Student Involvement in Collegiate Clubs and Organizations*

by Kimberley Fay Case, Ph.D., Higher Education

When college students get involved in co-curricular activities, they learn more and develop more as persons, citizens, and leaders.

But, notes Kimberley Case (Ph.D., Higher Education, 2010), “Students who bypass these co-curricular activities miss added opportunities for learning. Research and anecdotal evidence indicate that men are more at risk than women for missing some of these learning and developmental gains due to lower participation rates.”

Case studied the role that gender plays within
the college experience, and then attempted to identify "predictors that can assist educators in the promotion of meaningful involvement." The study included more than 1,500 senior men and women at member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities.

“After working with students in higher education for over 15 years and observing less than expected numbers of men participating in many co-curricular programs and leadership roles, I wanted my dissertation work to focus on understanding this gender gap,” said Case.

However, what the results of her study have revealed as much as anything is the “added complexity associated with predictors and understanding men’s involvement in co-curricular activities.” …understanding these complexities is an important pursuit for leaders in higher education.”

Chief predictors for co-curricular involvement for both men and women were previous high school involvement, anticipated college involvement, working on campus, and student-faculty interaction. The only unique predictor for men’s participation was participation in intercollegiate sports, but it was unclear whether male respondents interpreted participation in intercollegiate sports as co-curricular activity itself.

“Most of the variance in men’s and women’s level of involvement was not explained through the variables represented in this study,” Case concluded, “Gender and involvement may be so complex that numerous variables contribute to a deeper meaning of the topic.”

Currently, Case is a visiting research fellow at Goshen College, Goshen, IN, in the Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning. Her research focuses on the success of students of color and on program evaluation.

Welcome to America: Study Shows Acculturated Mexican Americans Are More Likely than Less Acculturated to Gain Too Much Pregnancy Weight

TITLE:
Determinants of Excessive Gestational Weight Gain in Mexican American Women in Los Angeles by Ruth Mielke, Ph.D., Nursing

According to research, a little over a third of Mexican American women gain too much weight during pregnancy, often retain that weight, and then become even heavier by the next pregnancy. This phenomenon of gaining too much pregnancy weight, retaining that weight, and then gaining even more weight with the next pregnancy makes excessive pregnancy weight, which increases the risk for developing diabetes, high blood pressure, and post-pregnancy obesity, one of the most significant problems of this group.

Ruth Mielke (Ph.D., Nursing, 2010) has worked for 20 years as a certified nurse midwife in Los Angeles and has provided prenatal care and delivery care to thousands of Mexican American women. She wanted to investigate what factors put these women at such risk for gaining too much weight during pregnancy.

“If Mexican American women with these risk factors are identified at the beginning of pregnancy, targeted nutrition and physical activity information can be given in order to ensure a better chance of gaining pregnancy weight that is appropriate for their body mass index,” she argued.

So, according to her research, who among Mexican American women is most at risk for gaining too much pregnancy weight?

Mexican American women who were already overweight prior to pregnancy were the most likely to gain too much pregnancy weight, she said, as well as those who had a history of hypertension, who were more acculturated, and — surprisingly — had partners who were better educated.

Mielke said the risk factor of having a partner with higher education may be associated with increased acculturation. Other studies have suggested that increased acculturation often means adopting the less healthful dietary practices of the United States.

“Mexican American women in all pre-pregnancy categories who were less acculturated were less likely to have excessive gestational weight gain,” Mielke concluded. “For more acculturated women, suggesting that they prepare foods like their abuelas did may awaken the value of consuming traditional foods over higher fat fast foods common in the United States.”

Mielke is now teaching graduate nursing classes at California State University at Fullerton as well as continuing occasional midwifery work in Los Angeles.

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